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Market Brief - Product Specific Import Regulations Syria - Food and Agricultural Import Regulations Report (FAIRS)

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This report was prepared by the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service in Damascus, Syria for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care was taken in the preparation of this report, information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies was not available. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers, who are normally best equipped to research such matters with local authorities, before any goods are shipped. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCT IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

SECTION I. FOOD LAWS

To protect local production and save hard currency, most consumer-ready foods and beverages are not permitted to be imported. Imports of dairy products (except milk powder), honey, chilled or frozen meats are not permitted. Bulk commodities are permitted to be imported if there is insufficient local production. In general, fruit imports (except bananas) and vegetables are not permitted. Imports of baby foods, cigarettes, wine, and other alcoholic beverages are restricted to the public sector. Wheat and wheat flour imports were restricted to the public sector. Recently, imports of soft wheat and wheat flour for pasta production were permitted for the private sector provided that the resulting flour and pasta are exported.

The Foreign Trade Regulations, last issued by the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade in 1994, govern imports of all commodities and are effectively enforced.

An import permit is necessary to import every commodity. It is obtained from the Foreign Trade Department of the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade. The prior approval of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform is sometimes necessary for some commodities.

SECTION II. LABELING REQUIREMENTS

All packs of imported food stuffs should include the following basic information in Arabic: Brand name, producer's name, country of origin, date of production, date of expiry, weight, and ingredients. Other languages can also be put on the label provided the required information is present in Arabic. Labels have to be placed at the time of production and cannot be added after the goods arrive. This applies to all product packages including institutional packs. Sample sized products are not common in this market. Shelf life is determined by the producer. Country of origin should be the same as that in the import license. Nutrient content claims and health claims are not provided for in the import regulations.

SECTION III. PACKAGING AND CONTAINER REGULATIONS

There are no packaging or container size requirements. Local preference is for metric units, i.e. kilograms and liters. Rice is imported in 25 and 50 kilogram bags; vegetable oil is imported in 1-2-3-5-20 and 180 liter containers.

There are no municipal waste disposal laws or product recycling regulations. There are no restrictions on packaging materials like PVC as long as the packaging material is not produced from recycled components.

SECTION IV. FOOD ADDITIVE REGULATIONS

Food additives are permitted as long as they are permitted to be used in the country of origin of the product.

SECTION V. PESTICIDE AND OTHER CONTAMINANTS

Pesticide residues are not provided for and are not usually tested for. The general trend is to accept the product if it is permitted to be used in the country of origin.

SECTION VI. OTHER REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

All imported food products are tested to ensure conformity to import standards before they are released from customs. A customs officer collects samples that are sent to the central laboratory of the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade. Another sample is sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The samples are carried on a daily basis by the customs employees from the ports to the capital, where the laboratories are located. The test results are usually ready within a few days. The Ministry of Agriculture tests are free of charge while the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade tests cost 5,000 Syrian pounds (about USD 100) per lot. Mail order shipments for food stuffs are not common. Samples can be released from customs.

Product registration is not necessary. The products are monitored at the retail/wholesale distribution level by the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade that looks for the validity of the date of expiry to make sure that the product is still fit for human consumption, for the presence of insect infestation, or for unusual odors in the product.

The following certificates are required for the goods to be released from customs: a bill, certificate of origin, phytosanitary certificate for plant products (veterinary certificate for animal products), and radiation certificate. These documents have to be properly certified by the Syrian embassy in the country of origin.

SECTION VII. OTHER SPECIFIC STANDARDS

According to the best available information, there are no laws or legislation regarding weights and measures, vitamin-enriched requirements, and dietetic or special use foods. Discussions regarding novel foods (genetically modified organisms) and organic food are starting. However, no decision is expected in the near future. Syria does not import any marine products other than canned tuna fish and sardines. Imported animals are usually put in quarantine for two weeks.

SECTION VIII. COPYRIGHT AND/OR TRADEMARK LAWS

Trademarks and brand names are protected under domestic law provided the trade mark is registered at the Office of Intellectual Property Protection, Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade. There are limitations on trade marks and brand name registration.

SECTION IX. IMPORT PROCEDURES

The customs clearing process starts with the arrival of the shipment at the port, its documents to the bank, collecting the samples for testing, obtaining the test results, verification of the test results at the port of entry, payment of the customs taxes, the unified taxes, and (for some products) the levies. The customs clearance procedure takes about one week.

There is an appeal system if the laboratory analysis test results are not satisfactory. In this case another sample is collected and tested.

APPENDIX

For further help please contact the Office of Agricultural Affairs, American Embassy, P.O. Box 29, Damascus, Syria, Phone: (963-11) 3331342, Fax: (963-11) 2247938.

Syria: List of Customs Duties for Major Agricultural Products

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Customs Duties</u> <u>Percent</u>	<u>Unified Tax</u>
1. Horses, donkeys, mules, pigs, poultry		
Birds, bees	7	13
Cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, camels	1	6
2. Meat: fresh, chilled, or frozen:		
Pork	15	14
Other meat	7	13
3. Fish	7	13
4. Milk, cream, butter ghee, eggs, honey	7	13
Butter, cheese	15	14
5. Bones (treated with acid)	7	13
6. Bulbs	15	14
Seedlings	1	6
Flowers: fresh or dried	30	17
7. Mushrooms, truffles, olives, tomatoes		
Onions, garlic, potatoes, asparagus,		
Artichoke, turnips, peas, beans, fava		
beans, cucumbers, eggplants, okra	15	14
Dried peas and beans, lentils, chickpeas		
Mung beans	30	17
8. Dates, bananas, coconuts, pineapple,		
Mangoes, guava, brazil nut, cashews, figs		
Grapes, chestnuts, pine nuts, apples		
Pears, quince, apricots, peaches, plums,		
Cherries, loquats, berries, pomgrenate,		
Water melons, cantaloups	30	17
Oranges, tangerines, lemons, almonds,		

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Customs Duties</u>	<u>Unified Tax</u>
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		<u>Percent</u>	
	walnuts, hazelnuts, pistachios	15	14
9.	Coffee, matte, pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, Saffron, ginger	30	17
	Tea, thyme	7	13
	Vanilla, cardamom, anis, coriander, cumin	15	
10.	Grains: Wheat, barley, corn	1	6
	Rice	7	13
11.	Wheat flour, malted barley	1	6
	Corn flour, barley flour, semolina		
	Potato powder	30	17
	Rice flour	15	14
	Starch (for industry)	7	13
12.	Peanuts, palm seeds, apricot seed, Sugar cane, licorice roots, tamarind	15	14
	Soybeans, castor beans, sesame, sugar beets, hops, straw	1	6
	Seeds for planting	1	6
	Cotton seeds, sunflower seeds	7	13
	Carob, water melon seeds, pumpkin seeds, Squash seeds	30	17
13.	Gum, gum arabica, hops extract	7	13
	Tannins, pektin, agar agar (for medicine)	1	6
14.	Bamboo	1	6
15.	Olive oil, lard, stearin, beef fat	15	14
	Corn oil, sunflower seed oil, soybean Oil, cotton seed oil, sesame oil, peanut oil, linseed oil, coconut oil, palm seed Oil, margarine (of plant origin), cod liver oil	7	13
	Sulfur oil and other veg oils for soap, lanolin, veg. oil crushing byproducts	1	6
	Margarine (of animal origin)	30	17

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Customs</u>	<u>Unified</u>
		<u>Duties</u>	<u>Tax</u>
		<u>Percent</u>	
16.	Prepared livers	50	21
	Prepared beef and mutton	7	13
	Prepared poultry meat	30	17
	Prepared pork	50	21
	Prepared fish (tuna and sardines)	1	6
	Meat extracts, caviar	100	32
17.	Sugar: raw	7	13
	Refined	15	14
	Glucose (for medicines), lactose	1	6
	Sugar syrups	30	17
	Molasses	15	14
	Sugar products	75	27
18.	Cocoa beans, cocoa butter	1	6
	Cocoa paste, cocoa powder	15	14
	Chocolate	75	27
19.	Baby food	7	13
	Pasta, bread, biscuits	30	17
20.	Baby foods (made from vegetables), jams,		
	Pineapple juice (for industry)	15	14
	Mushrooms, truffles	50	21
	Molasses	30	17
	Prepared olives, prepared asparagus,		
	prepared fruits, prepared pineapples,		
	tomato paste, apricot paste	75	27
21.	Coffee extracts, tea extracts, coffee		
	Substitutes	30	17
	Mustard, sauces, soups, yeasts, jello	15	14
22.	Mineral water, non-alcoholic drinks	30	17
	Vinegar	50	21
	Beer, fermented grape juice, wine,		
	Champagne, ouzo	100	32
	Alcoholic drinks	150	35

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Customs</u>	<u>Unified</u>
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	<u>Duties</u>	<u>Tax</u>
	<u>Percent</u>	
23. Fish meal, meat and bone meal, soybean Meal, wheat bran, sugar beet pulp, And other feed products	1	6
24. Tobacco: leaf	7	13
Tombac	15	14
Cut tobacco, snuffing tobacco	15	14
Cigarettes, cigars	30	17